**Zika Virus**

Zika is a virus that is spread in hot climates by *infected* mosquitoes. Most mosquitos do not carry the Zika virus, and most people who are exposed to the virus do not get sick from it.

**Symptoms** occur in about 20% of those exposed to Zika, typically about 2 to 7 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. The symptoms are usually mild, and may include fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (pinkeye), or less commonly, headache.

**Treatment** at this time is only to relieve symptoms: There is currently no vaccine or medicines to treat the virus itself. It may help to drink lots of fluids, and to rest, and to take over-the-counter medication for pain, such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, aspirin, or naproxen. It is rare that symptoms are severe enough to require hospitalization. However there does appear to be an association between Zika and a rare but potentially serious immune disorder called Guillain-Barré syndrome that can affect the nervous system.

**Transmission** of Zika can occur between a pregnant woman and her fetus or baby during pregnancy or at delivery, where it appears to be associated with microcephaly, a serious birth defect of the brain, and other problems.

There are also reports that the Zika virus has been spread through blood transfusions and sexual contact.

**Prevention** is key: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends **pregnant women** [avoid travel to areas with high rates of Zika virus.](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/zika-travel-information)

**Men** who live or travel in areas of Zika activity are encouraged by the CDC to avoid having sexual activity with pregnant women. Alternatively, if vaginal, anal or oral sex occurs with *ANY partner*, condoms must be used throughout the encounter. After returning from an infected area, men should continue abstaining from sex or use condoms for another 2 weeks.

**Non-pregnant** heterosexual women of reproductive age, (15-44 years old), would be wise to use a reliable form of birth control *in addition to* condoms when they live or visit areas where Zika is found, or when their partners have recently returned from such areas.

For updated maps of affected areas, visit the websites for the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov/zika/) and the [Pan American Health Organization](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=11585&Itemid=41688&lang=en).

**Diagnosis:** Tell your healthcare practitioner if you are or think you may be pregnant and recently traveled to an area of high-Zika prevalence. A blood test can detect the infection.

**Mosquito bite prevention:**

* Use FDA-approved insect repellent;
* Wear clothes that cover arms, legs, and feet;
* Stay in places that have air conditioning or that use screens over windows and doors. If not an option, use mosquito netting over beds;
* Remove standing water near residences (to prevent mosquito breeding).

More info here: <http://www.cdc.gov/chikungunya/pdfs/fs_mosquito_bite_prevention_travelers.pdf>